

CHURCH AT EAST SUTTON.



EAST SUTTON CHURCH, KENT.

THE subject of the plate is one of those beautiful old country churches so plentifully scattered over the surface of Great Britain, and which affords an exhaustless fund of study and employment, to the architect and antiquary.

It was said not long since by one of our most eminent reviewers, that every nook of our island had been completely ransacked and described by our tourists and topographers; that it would be difficult to name any structure of the olden time, sketches of which had not been transmitted into the portfolio or the library. This was said in 1821. What an immense mass of valuable architectural and topographical matter has since been published. Every succeeding age appears to examine and study more closely the works of the olden time. In the old Popish ages every village church was a small temple, splendidly enriched with gilded carvings, paintings, and sculptures, adorned with velvet hangings and embroidery, and containing stores of plate and reliquaries. Each was so filled with these treasures of art, that it has been too difficult a task for even the eagerness of fanaticism wholly to destroy them. At present the village church is visited by all sorts of seekers after the remains; one goes merely to take rubbings off the brasses; another to sketch or measure the windows, or to inspect the plan; another visits it to take notes of inscriptions on tombs or other archaeological matters, and every one finds something to his particular taste; very little indeed sometimes remains, but still there is always something of interest in an old English church.

In point of fact, the building cannot be too carefully inspected,—one never knows how much it will yield; the temptation is strong to strip the whitewash and yellow ochre from the font, or off the walls, in search of distemper paintings, almost sure to be found underneath, or to strip off the plaster itself, in search of old Norman arches, Easter sepulchres, piscinae, sedilia, or ambries, frequently visible behind it. Nearly the whole of the sketches made by our grandpapas, those accurate south-east views, where the skull and crossbones were

so carefully depicted on the tombstones, and the weathercock so prominently made out on the stumped tower, while the tracery of the windows was indicated by a nondescript convolution of lines, that it was difficult to tell whether the arches were intended to be pointed, circular, or elliptic,—all such representations are now considered very crude and unsatisfactory, even by a superficial reader.

To the architect, the village church may be considered as an English antique, a remnant of the beautiful style of building practised by his forefathers,—it belongs to his country, speaks home to his feelings, and so beautiful is it, that the more it is studied, the more it is admired—but why should he consent in his own buildings to be a servile copyist, or to puzzle his brains with symbolism? Is it necessary when sketching beautiful examples of piscinae, sedilia, and such like remnants of the building, deeply to study their ancient usages, and engender a superstitious veneration for them? Certainly not; beautiful as the Gothic style may be, it has not a whit more to do with the pure principles of Christianity, than the ancient styles of Greece or Rome; in fact, scarcely so much, for after all, the Roman basilica is the true original of the Christian church.

East Sutton is a small hamlet attached to the village of Sutton Vallance, near Maidstone, in Kent; it consists of only a few scattered farm-houses, the church dedicated to St. Peter and Paul, of which a view is now given; and the old manor-house, a venerable building of the reigns of Henry VIII. and Elizabeth, the property and residence of Sir Edmund Filmer, Bart., M.P. for West Kent. At a small distance from the manor-house, in the adjoining parish, is a mansion called Little Charlton, one of the most valuable and picturesque structures of the reign of Elizabeth; it was erected by Sir Robert Filmer, who was for twenty years prothonotary of the Common Pleas in Queen Elizabeth's reign. At a place called Great Charlton, close by, are the remains of an old building, apparently the hall of an hostelry, but they are so small, serving only for the habitation of a cottager, that it is impossible to hazard much conjecture con-

cerning them. The church at East Sutton is a remarkably well-planned edifice, the interior is at once elegant and picturesque. It consists of a nave and aisles, a chancel with north and south chapels, which opening into the chancel by two arches on each side, form as it were aisles to it; there is a porch and tower, the lower portion of the latter is opened into the nave by a noble arch, reaching the full height of the interior; every portion of the building is of different date and style, the nave, the most ancient part, being of the time of Henry III.; it is quite perfect, even the tie-beams of the roof, which are of very good design, remain. The part of the building most deserving notice is the north chapel; this contains two extraordinarily fine windows, representations of which will appear in the following number. The date of this portion is probably between 1350 and 1400; the small window appears even later.

The building contains numerous memorials of the Filmer family; among them is a fine brass (lately published by Mr. Waller), in which are represented in the superb costume of the reign of James I., Sir Edward Filmer and his lady, with their nine sons and nine daughters. Admirers of old church architecture will find several other remains at East Sutton, besides those noticed in this paper, which is merely one by an architect, that would well repay a visit to the spot; railway communication offers easy access, and in the immediate neighbourhood of Sutton Vallance, are Hollingbourne manor-house, Boughton Malherbe, Leeds Castle, Godfrey-house, and many others of equal interest. C. J. R.

Gas.—Application will be made during the approaching session of Parliament, to incorporate a company whose object is to supply gas to the whole of the metropolis and other parts of Middlesex, together with parts of Kent, Surrey, Essex, Hereford, Bedford, Bucks, Northampton, Leicester, and Derby. The company have adopted the name of "National Gas Association," and they contemplate purchasing the entire rights and interests of all the existing metropolitan gas companies.